

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08 FRB-03
INR-10 NSAE-00 ICA-11 TRSE-00 XMB-02 OPIC-03
SP-02 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 NSC-05 SS-15 STR-07
CEA-01 L-03 PA-01 /093 W
-----095679 010231Z /23

R 291515Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9204
INFO AMCONSUL KADUNA

C O N F I D E N T I A L LAGOS 8028

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, NI
SUBJECT: THE COST OF FESTAC

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

1. ACCORDING TO A REPORT MADE PUBLIC ON JUNE 28
BY FEDERAL INFORMATION COMMISSIONER DR.G.B.
LETON, THE MONTH LONG 1977 SECOND WORLD BLACK AND
AFRICAN FESTIVAL OF ARTS AND CULTURE (FESTAC)
COST THE NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT 141 MILLION NAIRA,
OR ABOUT 225 MILLION DOLLARS.

2. SUBTOTALS WITHIN THE OVERALL FIGURE INCLUDE
58 MILLION NAIRA FOR PERMANENT STRUCTURES, MOTOR
VEHICLES, AND EQUIPMENT. AMONG THE STRUCTURES
LISTED WERE THE NATIONAL THEATER (36.5 MILLION),
THE DURBAR HOTEL (8.27 MILLION), AND DURBAR CAMPS IN
KADUNA (5.05 MILLION). ACCORDING TO THE REPORT, 48.8
MILLION NAIRA WENT FOR FURNITURE, KITCHENS, LAUNDRY FACIL-
ITIES AND SOUND EQUIPMENT WHILE 35 MILLION NAIRA WAS
SPENT ON FOOD AND OTHER CONSUMABLE GOODS. THE
INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT USED UP 16.7 MILLION
NAIRA. NOT INCLUDED IN THESE FIGURES WAS THE COST
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OF FESTAC VILLAGE AND THE BELAWI SQUARE STADIUM.

3. THE REPORT REVEALED THAT FESTAC WAS ALMOST
EXCLUSIVELY SUPPORTED BY THE NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT.
OF THE 62 COUNTRIES THAT PARTICIPATED, ONLY 54
PAID THE FULL 6,500 NAIRA REGISTRATION FEE. SIX
OTHER COUNTIRES DONATED 36,000 NAIRA. TICKET SALES

REALIZED 193,000 NAIRA; HOWEVER, THE COST OF
PRINTING THE TICKETS WAS 150,000 NAIRA. END
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4. BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL.

4. COMMENT: FESTAC HAS BECOME A SYMBOL FOR MANY
NIGERIANS OF THE WAY THE OIL WEALTH OF THE COUNTRY
HAS BEEN WASTED. DISSATISFACTION AMONG THE
UNIVERSITY COMMUNITIES, PRESS, AND ASPIRING
POLITICIANS HAS INCREASED AS IT HAS BECOME
APPAREN WITH THE REDUCTION IN OIL REVENUES THAT
NIGERIA'S FINANCIAL RESOURCES ARE NOT UNLIMITED.
AT THE SAME TIME THERE HAS BEEN A SPATE OF RUMORS
ABOUT THE "REAL" COST OF FESTAC, THE STADIUM ON
BALEWA SQUARE, AND THE LAGOS TRADE FAIR. FOR
EXAMPLE, TWO FACULTY MEMBERS AT THE UNIVERSITY
OF LAGOS (UNILAG) RECENTLY ASSURED US, IN DISCUSSING
UNILAGS'S FINANCIAL PLIGHT, THAT FESTAC HAD COST
AT LEAST 500 MILLION NAIRA AND A REPORT TO THAT
EFFECT INT EH CABINET OFFICE HAD BEEN SUPPRESSED.

5. THE FMG APPARENTLY ATTEMPTED TO HEAD OFF
THIS KIND OF NEGATIVE SPECULATION BY PUBLISHING
THE FESTAC DATA, AND COMMISSIONER LETON TOOK
CARE TO BLAME FESTAC ON THE GOWON REGIME, WHICH
HAD INITIALLY DEVELOPED THE IDEA IN 1973. ACCORD-
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ING TO LETON, ANY GOVERNMENT, NO MATTER HOW IT COMES
TO POWER:

"ASSUMES RESPONSIBILITY FOR INTERNATIONAL
COMMITMENTS MADE ON BEHALF OF THE COUNTRY
BY THE PREVIOUS ADMINISTRATION. IT IS FOR
THIS REASON THAT TREATIES AND AGREEMENTS
ARE ALWAYS BINDING ON A COUNTRY AND MAY
NOT BE UNILATERALLY REVOKED ONCE IT WAS
SIGNED ON BEHALF OF THAT COUNTRY BY
COMPETENT GOVERNMENT OR AUTHDJITY."

LETON ALSO DEFENDED FESTAC WHICH HE SAID HAD RECENTLY
BECOME "A WHIPPING BOY" BY SAYING THAT IT PROVIDED
"UNQUAOOZIIABLE DIRECT AND INDIRECT BENEFITS" TO
THE NATION.

6. DESPITE THE FMG'S UNENTHUSIASTIC DEFENSE OF
FESTAC, THERE IS PROBABLY STILL A GREAT DEAL OF
POLITICAL HAY TO BE MADE OUT OF IT BY CIVILIAN
POLITICIANS. WAZIRI IBRAHIM'S
PLATFOR AUTHOR TOLD US RECENTLY THAT HE PLANNED
TO USE IT AS A PRIME EXAMPLE OF HOW NIGERIA
OUGHT NOT TO SPEND ITS MONEY. END CONFIDENTIAL.

WYMAN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: COSTS, CULTURAL PRESENTATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 29 jun 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978LAGOS08028
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780271-0918
Format: TEL
From: LAGOS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t1978068/aaaaagny.tel
Line Count: 117
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 7607c68c-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 03 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2430222
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: THE COST OF FESTAC BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED
TAGS: PGOV, SCUL, NI
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/7607c68c-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014